

Let the Bliss Go and Inquire to Know

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Arlindo: Hello, Georg. I will share with you my experience in 2011 shortly before self-knowledge took place. I was attached to “bliss,” among other experiences my meditation was producing. My mind had become *sattvic*, but I was still owning and running a successful Italian restaurant in the USA, which required lots of *rajoguna* as well. Whenever I had time, I would sit in meditation and easily slide into silence, peace, bliss – a mind free of desires for *samsaric* objects – but still, there was a strong desire lingering and unsettling my mind, the desire for *moksa*. At the time I knew already that what I was seeking was the self, and that the self was no other than my own *jiva*-self.

A day came when I finally understood that all those experiences were of no help at all, because they were impermanent states of mind. I did not know James or Vedanta and had no clue about what had happened to my mind or how important a *sattvic* mind was for self-inquiry. Not having a proper teaching to guide me, I was intuitively inquiring into the nature of consciousness – but at least I knew that the self/pure consciousness was the only invariable, ever-permanent factor. That was enough knowledge to allow me to discard all those mystical states of mind as “not-real” because they would come, stay for a while and then go, leaving me behind with a desire for more.

I remember the day I stood up from my morning meditation and told my wife that I would never meditate again or try to reproduce those experiences, because they were not real. After that it was a question of a few weeks or months before the self was realized as my own consciousness. Only a year or two later on I met my dearest *guru*, Ramji, and the process of self-actualization began gathering speed. I am sharing this with you because, as yourself, I was very much attached to my bliss until, by the power of that one single teaching, I understood that “bliss” was just another object, i.e. impermanent (*mithya*).

I had heard that bliss is the sixth stage, and to get to the seventh stage of existence-bliss knowledge is required.

You are absolutely right when you say that eventually, at the last stage, only knowledge will do the job. And why? Because the self cannot be contacted by the senses and the mind, and therefore IT cannot be experienced, because it is not an object! In this apparent reality we call “the world” there are only two factors operating: the subject and an object of experience – that is the only show in town. ☺ If the self is not an object, by logical exclusion the only other option is that IT is the subject and it cannot be experienced. At this point of the inquiry, the only question left is to find out who and what the “subject” is.

Once we clearly understand that the self is no other than “my own” consciousness, we call it self-knowledge. That is why “enlightenment” is referred to as self-knowledge rather than “self-experience.” Experience is always in reference to an object, and since all objects in the *dharma* field are always changing from one moment to the other, there is no such a thing as a permanent object of experience. Unfortunately, so many seeker of truth remain stuck in *sattva* because, as I often say, as far as duality goes, spiritually induced bliss is better than sex and food put together.

But, most importantly, you have asked: Is it simply just a matter of firmly established knowledge to get to the seventh and final stage of *moksa*?

Self-realization = self-knowledge, but as you probably know, it does not necessarily translate to *moksa*. *Moksa*, as Mira has mentioned, is the product of a gradual process of constant application of scriptural knowledge to our daily experience of life until self-knowledge is so firm that it neutralizes those persistent binding *vasanas* and therefore prevents them from manifesting as compelling desires and aversions in the conscious mind. But the first and most important step is to be completely convinced (without a doubt) that “enlightenment” is only knowledge and not an experience. Once that certainty is achieved, the next logical question to look into is: What kind of knowledge is IT?

Knowledge can be direct or indirect and mostly obtained by perception or inference, but the most fundamental thing about knowledge is that it is always “intellectual.” *Isvara* did not provide us with any other instrument to assimilate knowledge besides the intellect. Having come to this conclusion, we can assert with full confidence that self-knowledge is intellectual knowledge and therefore ordinary knowledge rather than “experiential-mystical-esoteric-intuitive knowledge.”

What then distinguishes the *jivamukta*'s self-knowledge from the *jiva*'s self-knowledge? If self-knowledge is not a type of “special” knowledge but rather simple intellectual knowledge, why then does it bear fruit (*moksa*) in the case of the *jivamukta* but not in the case of the *jiva*?

Two things are to be contemplated about this; first is that in most cases the *jiva*, consciously or not, still behaves as if self-knowledge is an indirect knowledge and therefore dependent on an object (the self) he wishes to contact and experience. This subtle misapprehension of the non-dual nature of the self is due to a subtle predominance of *rajoguna* while inquiring, and this very *rajoguna* (the projecting energy) will unsettle the intellect and prevent the clear apprehension of oneself as the non-dual self. I say this because my understanding is that self-knowledge begins with a moment of crystal-clear apprehension: I am the non-dual self, and for that to take place, at least for a moment, the mind needs to be free from *rajas* and *tamas*. This moment of clear vision is the force producing the initial confidence in self-knowledge.

Secondly, *jiva*'s self-knowledge is often contaminated by subtle doubts about the scriptures. *Jiva*'s mind often wishes to believe it, pretends to believe it, but instead it remains suspicious, it does not really trust it, it insists on clinging to its limiting notions about itself. It tends to hold onto some of its past spiritual concepts, which are the building blocks constituting his sense of identity as a spiritual *jiva*. It is relevant to remember that ideas are thoughts, thoughts are energies, and every energy has its own vibe; some thoughts will produce a sense of freedom and limitless, and others just the opposite.

Ramji often says that it is the “lack of confidence” in the knowledge that differentiates the *jivamukta*'s self-knowledge from what we sometimes refer to as mental/theoretical self-knowledge. It took me a little while, but eventually, as always, I had come to fully accept and embrace his understanding about “lack of confidence.” No wonder Ramji has been hammering on these two points for so long: (1) self-knowledge is not an experience and (2) application of self-knowledge will neutralize/dissolve one's doubts, i.e. one's ignorance.